Jackie to Manchester: Get Well Soon

MRS. JACQUELINE KENNEDY

By ARTHUR GREENSPAN
New York Post Correspondent

Middletown, Conn., Dec. 27—Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy have sent telegrams to hospitalized author William Manchester expressing distress at his illness.

Mrs. Kennedy's message was sent from New York several hours before she departed for a Caribbean vacation. She said she was "distressed" to learn of the author's hospitalization with pneumonia here, and told him "how much I hope" he will recover soon.

The Senator wired his get-well message from Sun Valley, Idaho, where he is on a skiing vacation with his family.

Both messages were telephoned to Middlesex Memorial Hospital here by Western Union late yesterday. The text of the Senator's message was not available, but from sources close to the Kennedy family it was learned Mrs. Kennedy's telegram said:

"Please know how distressed I am to know that you are sick, and how much I hope you will be better soon."

The 44-year-old Manchester, author of "The Death of a President," emerged over the weekend from a self-imposed retreat into which he disappeared on returning from Europe two weeks ago.

Now he is the patient in Room 517, with an eyepatch over his right eye and continuous treatment with antibiotics to attest to a Christmas weekend which couldn't have been less like a holiday.

It began Friday night as he was helping with the family Christmas tree at his rambling two-story gray home on High St. here. A pine needle scratched the cornea of his right eye (he has been treated for this by a specialist).

The following evening, Christmas Eve, he began to feel ill. By Sunday night, he had chills, fever and was in great discomfort. Late Christmas night, Dr. F. Irwin Tracey, internist who has been the Manchester family physician for many years, was summoned. He quickly ordered an ambulance.

When Manchester was admitted to the hospital at 12:30 a.m. yesterday, his temperature was 104. Massive doses of antibiotics were administered; laboratory tests and X-rays were ordered; and the doctor confirmed his diagnosis as pneumonitis, a form of pneumonia which in Manchester affects only a small portion of the lower left lung.

A hospital spokesman said: "This was a recurrence of an illness which first hit Manchester in London. There they diagnosed it as an upper respiratory inflection and he was treated at his hotel. But it was not as severe as the current case."

Tracey said that in addition to having suffered this disease once before there might be some connection between his emotional stresses brought on by the court fight with the Kennedy's and the current illness.

"Perhaps his emotional stress of the past week left him in a weakened condition where he could be susceptible to the virus that struck him."

The doctor said his patient had been confused and depressed for the last few weeks, and said that after Manchester recovers physically he may require some sort of psychiatric help.

This statement about Manchester's mental state was brought out during Tracey's press briefing yesterday. But after the physician saw his patient last night, he was more encouraged and said, "He's himself again."

Manchester and Tracey spoke during the doctor's evening visit, and Tracey noted that the author was "not in any way depressed emotionally or mentally. His condition has improved and he's doing very well."

Manchester's temperature has returned to normal. Intravenous feeding was stopped at midnight and he was placed on a regular diet.

The author's wife, Julia, has not yet been to the hospital because she, too, is confined to her bed on Tracey's orders.

Visitors Are Barred

Manchester will be hospitalized for at least a week and perhaps 10 days, normal with this kind of illness. And while here he will remain in virtual isolation. The hospital information card has written on it, underlined in red, "No visitors except wife."

The telephone in Manchester's room has been disconnected.

Tracey has ordered Manchester not to talk about the book; not to do any work on it.

The world's press has been the hospital switchboard for words on Manchester's condition. Hundreds of calls, many from Europe, have deluged the hospital telephone operators.

Court Delay Expected In Battle of the Book

By ALBERT ELLENBERG

Postponement of court action in the dispute surrounding the book "The Death of a President" was virtually assured today by the hospitalization of author William Manchester.

Attorneys for publishers Harper & Row and Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy were scheduled to face each other in the chambers of State Supreme Court Justice Saul Streit today on Mrs. Kennedy's suit to block publication of the 300,000-word account of President Kennedy's assassination.

But a source close to Robert Kennedy, who is supporting Mrs. Kennedy's legal efforts, said the Senator "will have no reason to oppose any request for continuance."

Former Federal Judge Simon Rifkind, Mrs. Kennedy's chief counsel in the court battle, also said the would not oppose a postponement if the publishers asked for one.

"I have no grave objections to putting the matter over as long as necessary," Rifkind said. "I'll make that very clear. Counsel for Mr. Manchester needs the views of his client and that's not possible now."

There were no talks between the two sides yesterday, but a Kennedy source said negotiations "definitely had made progress and the meetings up until Christmas eve were friendly."

It is expected that any final agreement will be along the lines worked out with Look magazine, which has agreed to change passages Mrs. Kennedy felt were too "personal" to be included in the four-part, 60,000-word serialization due to begin Jan. 10.

LBJ Denies Interview

The dispute remains largely a duel of lawyers. Mrs. Kennedy and her two children are vacationing in Antigua; Robert Kennedy and his family are hitting the ski slopes of Sun Valley, Idaho, and Manchester is in a hospital in Middletown, Conn., being treated for pneumonia.

But there were repercussions of the controversy in Washington today as the White House vigorously denied that President Johnson had granted an "exclusive" interview—or any other kind—to Newsweek magazine. Newsweek's current issue contains President Johnson's purported recollections of the events surrounding the assassination, recollections differing at points from Manchester's descriptions of the same events.

President Johnson is also depicted as unhappy about the unflattering image of himself emerging from newspaper accounts of scenes in the book.

'Inaccurate and Untrue'

Presidential press secretary George Christian said that Johnson "did not talk to Newsweek. I'll not discuss the various attributions credited to so-called friends and alleged intimates except to say that I believe them to be inaccurate and untrue."

But Newsweek editor Osborn Elliott insisted that the magazine had "confidence in its reporter and in the reliability of the source . . . Had it been otherwise, we would not have printed the story."

According to the Newsweek account, President Johnson said that the Secret Service wanted the Kennedy coffin returned to Washington from Dallas in the Vice Presidential plane. But Johnson instead ordered the coffin placed on Air Force One, the Presidential plane.

"I wasn't going to let Mrs. Kennedy fly back alone with his body," Johnson is quoted as saying.

WILLIAM MANCHESTER